THE

Roman and *Engliſh*

COMEDY

CONSIDER'D and COMPAR'D.

With REMARKS on the

SUSPICIOUS HUSBAND.

AND

An EXAMEN into the Merit of the preſent

COMIC ACTORS.

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Roman and *English*

COMEDY

CONSIDER'D and COMPAR'D.

FROM the Indulgence ſhewn to my *Treatiſe on the Paſſions*, in which I have conſider'd the Merit of the Tragic Actors only, I have been encouraged to extend that Deſign; and now venture to preſent the Public with my Judgment on ſuch of their Theatrical Servants, as have diſtinguiſhed themſelves in Comedy.

But in order to eſtabliſh my Credit with the Reader, it may not be amiſs previouſly to obviate an Objection or two, that have been made to my Criticiſm on the Character of *Lear*.

I have been condemned for impeaching Mr. *Garrick's* Manner of cloſing the Curſe, at the End of the Firſt Act, with Tears; and that becauſe *Shakeſpear* (who beſt knows his own Meaning) has by the following Expreſſion dictated ſuch a Behaviour to the Actor,

I am aſham'd,
That thou haſt Power to ſhake my Manhood thus,
That theſe hot Tears, which break from me perforce, &c.

This Obſervation, *prima facie*, has, I muſt own, a tolerable Aſpect; but if theſe Critics had been a little more minute in their Enquiries, they would ſoon have diſcovered, that theſe Words have no Relation to any Part of the *Anathema*, but allude to a Paſſage that immediately ſucceeds it:

Go, go, my People.

The poor old King, enfeebled by Age, and his Spirits

Spirits almoſt exhauſted by the Rage and Violence of the preceding Paſſion, in attempting to recover from the Poſture of Kneeling, ſtaggers, and is ready to fall; at that Juncture, receiving the Aſſiſtance of his Attendants, it occurs to his Mind, that he is ſoon to be deprived of their Service, and they of his Protection, either of which Reflections are ſufficient to alter the Mode of the Mind, render the Tranſition from Rage to Tenderneſs natural, and account for the Paſſage that has occaſioned this Diſpute.

This Queſtion being (I flatter myſelf) pretty well ſettled, I am at Liberty to purſue the Deſign of the preſent Treatiſe, which is to draw a Compariſon between Antient and Modern Comedy, and determine to which the Preference is due: To this I ſhall add ſome Obſervations on the Comic Actors of the preſent Age.

The firſt Deſign of Dramatic Poetry, was to amend the Heart, improve the Underſtanding, and, at the ſame Time, pleaſe the Imagination. To Tragedy, one Species of the Drama was allotted, the Deſcription of thoſe Paſſions, which, when looſe and ungoverned, are productive of the moſt terrible Conſequences

quences on the one Hand; but if, on the other, they are kept within proper Limits, and chuse Reason for their Guide and Director, they become highly conducive to the Happiness of Mankind. To Comedy was assigned the Correction of Vices and Follies of an inferior sort.

In the first Instance, we are taught, by a Collection of fatal Events, to avoid Ruin and Misery; in the last, by a Representation of fashionable Foibles, and particular extravagant Humours, to shun Ridicule and Absurdity.

Sir *Richard Steele* has apologized for his Mixture of the Tragic with the Comic, by saying, that there is a sort of Distress too mean for Tragedy, and which (as it would be cruel to deprive the World of such useful Lessons) ought to have a Place in Comedy.

Did Tragedy owe its Essence to the Adventures and Misfortunes of People in High Life only, Sir *Richard*'s Argument might have some Weight; But it is the Distresses, not the Situations of Mankind, that are its Objects: If the Incidents are truly interesting, and the

Story

Story affecting the Rank and Quality of the *Perſonæ* are of no great Conſequence.

Suffer me now to direct your Obſervation to thoſe amongſt the Antients, who are moſt diſtinguiſhed for their Skill and Excellence in Dramatic Poetry. As *Sophocles*, *Euripides*, and *Seneca*, are the Chiefs of the Epic, ſo are *Ariſtophanes*, *Mænander*, *Plautus*, and *Terence*, amongſt the Comic.

It was the Practice of the Comic Poets, till the Time of *Mænander*, to expoſe on the Stage, by real Names, ſuch of their Fellow-Citizens as had diſtinguiſhed themſelves for any eminent Vice or Folly: But the univerſal Corruption and Degeneracy of ſubſequent Ages, having rendered that Cuſtom both uſeleſs and dangerous, *Mænander* introduced the Method of expoſing real Vices by the Aſſiſtance of feigned Characters. But as the Works of this Author have fallen a Sacrifice to Barbariſm and Ignorance, we are obliged to the Confeſſion of *Terence*, and the Obſervations of *Cæſar*, for all the Knowledge we have of his Excellence. And if the Judgment of the latter may be relied on, *Mænander* was happy in the Poſſeſſion of every Requiſite that can delight and improve an Age.

Terence

Terence has been ſaid to be but a ſervile Copier of this *Greek* Writer; but as the Comedies of the latter are loſt, we have a Right to treat the former as an Original, eſpecially as he is propoſed by our own Critics, who deſpiſe and decry all modern Productions,

Non quia Craſſe illepideve putetur
Sed quia nuper,

as the Standard of Dramatic Perfection: But as I have not all that Veneration for Antiquity, I ſhall take the Liberty to examine his Works with the ſame Freedom, as if he had lived but in the Days of *Dryden*; and if upon Enquiry I can diſcover, that any Writer of our own Time has excelled him, I ſhall pay him the ſame Honour, as if he and *Homer* had been Cotemporaries. Were I not appriſed of the ridiculous Methods made uſe of by thoſe who are appointed to inſtruct the Youth of this Nation in the Dead Languages, I ſhould be aſtoniſhed at the abſurd Pre-poſſeſſions and Prejudices that moſt Men entertain in Favour of the antient Writers.

A Claſſic is read only to be admired, a Modern Writer only to be condemned. I believe

I have more reaſon to blame this unaccountable Partiality, than moſt Men; for to it I owe two Corrections in one Day, in the Morning I was jerk'd for reading a Comedy of *Congreve's*, and in the Afternoon was again turn'd up for not being prepared in a bawdy Scene, between the two Maids in the Eunuch of *Terence*. If then in my Enquiry into the Reaſons, why what is wrong in one Writer, ſhould be ſanctified in another, I betray any Bitterneſs or Ill-nature, I hope the Reader will lay the Defect of my Brain to the Fault of my B——, for I

Cannot but remember ſuch things were,
And were moſt grievous to me.

But to our Purpoſe.

Terence (as I have before obſerved) is ſaid to have pirated all his Plots and Characters from *Menander*; nor has *Plautus* leſs Obligation to the *Greek* Writers than *Terence*; but as their Geniuſes were different, they have been ſucceſsful in different Imitations.

Plautus, from the luxuriant Pleaſantry of his Imagination, has been moſt happy in hitting the Humour, or *vis comica*, of his Maſter. *Terence*, from the Correctneſs of his Judgment,

and Chaſtity of his Manner; moſt fortunate in the Conduct of his Plot, and Purity of his Dialogue. But as this Gentleman is the critical Bell-weather, let us be a little more minute in our Enquiries after him. And firſt for his Fable.

There is ſuch a tireſome Sameneſs in the Plots and Incidents of *Terence*, that the Man who has read his firſt Comedy, may be fairly ſaid to have read them all.

Nor is he leſs barren in his Characters. Two doating old Fools have a Brace of ſenſeleſs Cubs for their Sons; the latter have a ſmart Servant allowed them, who has Wit enough to gull the old Gentlemen, and direct the young ones: A Girl, who oftentimes exiſts in Name only, is the Object of young Maſters Affections; but coming from the Lord knows where, and being the Lord knows who, why the Marriage is either impeded, or elſe great Perplexity and Diſtraction reſults from it; but, however, it turns out at laſt, by the Means of a Nurſe, that Miſs is a Citizen, a Friend's Daughter, perhaps; ſo the Caſket and Trinkets are produc'd, and all Matters made eaſy. This is the general Plan and Plot: And as to what is called Humour in Comedy, the

beſt

beſt Half of *Menander*, I can only ſay with *Ceſar*,

Utinam ut adjuncta.

And here it may not be improper to examine, what is, or ought to be meant, by the Words *Characters of Humours*.

There is ſcarce a Play-follower, or Dabler in Criticiſm, but has that Expreſſion conſtantly in his Mouth; and yet not one in five hundred of them, has a determinate Idea of what it means; ſome miſtake Wit for it, others Buffoonry, *&c. &c.* Perhaps my Judgment may be as wrong as theirs, but as it will aſſiſt my preſent Enquiries, give me Leave to be abſolute in my Definition of, and Diſtinction between, the Humouriſt, and Man of Humour.

In my Senſe, then, theſe Characters ſhould be never ſeparated: The firſt is the Perſon to be expoſed, and that by the Means and Aſſiſtance of the laſt; the latter we laugh with, but at the former.

The Humouriſt is a Man, who, from ſome Extravagance, or Diſeaſe of the Mind, is al-

ways ſaying or doing ſomething abſurd and ridiculous; but at the ſame Time is firmly perſuaded, that his Actions and Expreſſions are exactly proper and right. And ſo abſolutely requiſite is this laſt Circumſtance, to the Conſtitution of a Humouriſt, that a very elegant and judicious Writer, has made it the Mark by which you are to diſtinguiſh him; as Ridicule (ſays he) is the Teſt of Truth, ſo is Gravity of Humour.

The Man of Humour, on the other Hand, is always joyous and pleaſant; the Humouriſt is his Food; like the Carrion and Crow, they are never aſunder; it is to the Labour and Pleaſantry of the former, that you are indebted for all the Entertainment you meet with in the latter.

That this Hypotheſis may not appear altogether groundleſs, caſt yout Eye on *Lappet* and the *Mijer*, on *Gnatho* and *Thraſo*, almoſt the only Character of Humour in the Author before us, and then tell me, whether you are not obliged for your Knowledge of, and Laughter at, the Curmudgeon and *Miles Glorioſus*, to the Addreſs and Skill of the pert Chambermaid, and obſequious artful Conduct of the Flatterer.

If,

If, then, this be an accurate Account of the Characters in queſtion, you muſt be content to go without them in all the Plays of *Terence*, except the *Eunuch* and *Heautontimorumenos*, and depend on Plot, Incident, and Language, for your Entertainment.

Our next Search muſt muſt be into the Excellence of *Terence*'s Dialogue; and here, I believe, we muſt agree with *Cæſar*, that he is,

Puri ſermonis amator;

that is, that he is elegant in his Diction, chaſte in his Expreſſion, and, if it be any Merit in the Writer of a living Language, gramatically juſt.

I don't know whether this Obſervation or Objection (call it which you will) be juſt, but I can't help thinking, that we Moderns have improved on this chief Excellence of the *Latin* Poet. Pray can you diſtinguiſh any great Difference in his Dialogue? Is not the Language of the one, the Language of all? If there be any Difference, the polite Side is in Favour of the Servant: However, as *Terence* him-

himſelf was but a *Libertus*, this Partiality may be pardonable.

I think I can diſcern in the *Engliſh* Poets a Unity of Dialogue, unattended to by the Antients. I cannot conceive that you may exchange one ſingle Word in the humourous Character of *Vanburgh*, for a better: Each Man has a Language peculiar to himſelf, and what indeed is the Language of that Character in the World.

I can't ſay, the Manners of our Comedies are altogether ſo chaſte as thoſe of *Terence*; but this may, in a great Meaſure, depend on the different Taſtes of different Ages; and though I own a Poet's Views ſhould not be confined to the narrow Limits of his own Time or Country; yet as it has been generally the Misfortune of theſe Gentlemen to want ſomething more ſubſtantial than Applauſe, their Poverty muſt be their Apology.

Of even this Circumſtance do different Ages judge differently. A young Lady ſquawling out behind the Scenes, in the extreme Pangs of Labour, did not ſhock the Delicacy of the *Roman* Matrons, but was a modern Poet to introduce a

Juno

Juno Lucina fer opem,

I very much doubt, whether that ſingle Incident would not damn his whole Piece.

I think I can raiſe an Objection or two to the extreme Chaſtity of this Writer: The

Quid tum fatue,

after the Deſcription of the ſuppoſed *Eunuch*'s preparing to commit a Rape, is very near as expreſſive, as the Relation itſelf would have been; at leaſt the Imagination has a pretty good Subject to work upon: A double Entendre may be neglected, but that Mind muſt be phlegmatic indeed, that does not proceed beyond the *tum*, and gueſs at the ſubſequent Behaviour of the luſty *ſoever*. And, pray, what is your Judgment of the Chambermaid's *Nihil Poſſe*, in her Deſcription of a Eunuch.

But, however, as it was abſolutely neceſſary that the Audience ſhould be acquainted with the ſeveral Circumſtances that compoſe the above Scene, I believe few Writers would have

expreſſed

expreſſed the ſame Thoughts, with the ſame Delicacy; therefore let *Terence* enjoy a Reputation which our modern Poets (by their Practice) don't envy him.

But before I quit this Author, I ought, in common Juſtice, to take notice of a Character, which though not abſolutely complete, yet is poſſeſſed of ſome Qualities, that were it original, would give the Writer a Rank, which his Cotemporaries have thought fit to deny him.

The Character I mean, is the *Thraſo* of the *Eunuch*. The Out-lines of this Character are the ſame with the *Miles Glorioſus* of *Plautus*, and the *Bully-Back* of *Congreve*: And though I muſt confeſs, in the general Conduct of the Characters, he is excelled by both his Rivals, yet in one Inſtance, he is at leaſt equal to either of them.

Thraſo, in Conſequence of a Preſent made to a Courteſan, called *Thais*, was, by Compact, entitled to the ſole and undiſturbed Poſſeſſion of that Lady for three Days.

Phædria, the fine Gentleman of the Comedy, had poſſeſſed the Perſon, and ſtill preſerved the Affection

Affection of *Thais*. At his Requeſt the Captain was excluded before the expiration of his Term; in order to revenge this Inſult, *Thraſo* martials all his Domeſtics, from *Gnatho* to the Scullion, and leads them to attack the Manſion of *Thais*, from whom he intends, by Force, to recover the Girl he had given her.

But as from a Recital of this Paſſage, we can ſcarce do Juſtice to the Merit of the Author, and I don't recollect, that the Spirit of this Scene has been preſerved by any of his Tranſlators, I ſhall take the Liberty to preſent you with my Conception of the whole Incident.

ACT IV. SCENE VII.

Enter *Thraſo*, as General; *Gnatho*, Lieutenant-General; with Grooms, Cooks, Scullions, *&c. &c. &c.* for private Men.

Thra. What! and ſhall I pocket ſo groſs an Indignity? hey! *Gnatho?* No, e're that be ſaid, welcome grim Death. *Simalio, Donan, Syriſcus*, follow your Leader; I will firſt ſtorm her Citadel.

Gna. Right.

Thra. Then ſeize upon my Captive.

Gna. By all Means.

Thra. And as to the Harlot herſelf, her Puniſhment ſhall be proportioned to her Crime.

Gna. Equitable.

Thra. Donan, to your Direction I commit the Van: You, *Simalio*, are to command the Left Wing; and you, *Syriſcus*, the Right. But where's Lieutenant *Sanga*?

Sang. Here I be.

Thra. What's that thou ſqueezeſt in thy Paw, a Diſhclout? Death, Daſtard, doſt thou think we fight with Diſhclouts?

Sang. Being convinced of your Honour's Valour, and the Courage of your Soldiers, I gueſſed that this Affair would not end without Bloodſhed, ſo I brought this Diſhclout to waſh their Wounds.

Thra. Where are the Remainder of my Troops?

Sang. Troops! the Devil of any body is at home, but old *Sannio*, to take Care of the Houſe.

Thra. Do you, *Sanga*, draw up the Forces, whilſt I retire to the Rear, from whence my Orders ſhall be iſſued.

Gna. There's a maſterly Stroke; conſcious that the Succeſs of an Army depends on the Security of the General, he curbs his Valour,

and,

and, for the ſake of his Soldiers, retires to a Place of Safety.

Thra. In this I condeſcend to imitate the great *Pirrhus*.

The Cowardice and Vanity of this Behaviour and Expreſſion, are as ſtrong and delicate Marks of Character, as can be met with in any Writer; to which if you add the bluſtering Behaviour of *Thraſo* before the Entrance of *Thais*, and the Puſillanimity and Cowardice of his ſubſequent Conduct, I believe that you will confeſs, that the whole Scene is ſupported with great Spirit, Propriety, and Humour.

I have now finiſhed my Obſervations on *Terence*, and ſhall haſten to an Examination of thoſe Writers of this Nation, who are ſuppoſed capable of contending for the Palm with this Hero of Antiquity. With which then ſhall I begin, with *Shakeſpear*, *Johnſon*, or thoſe of later Date? Or ſuppoſe, as our Comic Genii are ſo various, we were firſt to enumerate the ſeveral Rules required in a Comedy, and oppoſe (occaſionally) our own Writers to each other, and all to the Antients.

To begin then with the Unities of *Ariſtotle*, which regard Time, Place, and Action; to

which we have added another, disregarded by the Writers of other Countries, Unity of Character.

The Rules prescribed by these Unities are, that your Time be limited to a natural Day; your Place unchanged; and your Action single. The fourth Unity requires, that your Character be preserved to the End in every Circumstance; and that he neither say, or do, any thing that might as well have been said, or done, by any other Person of the Play.

As to the Unities of Time, Place, and Action, I cannot say that we have strictly attended to them, unless in some particular Instances; such as the *Alchymist*, and most of the Plays of *Johnson*, *Shakespear*'s *Merry Wives of Windsor*; to which I might add some others; but, in general, these Bonds do not hit the Taste and Genius of the free-born luxuriant Inhabitants of this Isle: They will no more bear a Yoke in Poetry than Religion.

No political nor critical Monarch shall give Laws to them: They have indeed sometimes given Proofs, that they do not despise these Mandates of *Aristotle*, because it is not in their Capacity to comply with them, but because they

they will not be indebted to any other Country for what they can obtain without its Aſſiſtance.

I do not believe, that it ever was in the Power of Man, to furniſh out a more elegant, pleaſing, and intereſting Entertainment, than *Shakeſpear* has, in many Inſtances, given us, without obſerving any one Unity, but that of Character; his adhering to that alone, with the Variety of his Incidents, the Propriety of his Sentiments, the Luxuriancy of his Fancy, and the Purity and Strength of his Dialogue, have produced, in one Inſtance alone, more Matter for Delight and Inſtruction, than can be collected from all the ſtarv'd, ſtrait-lac'd Brats, that every other Baird has produc'd. Can then our Contempt and Reſentment be too ſtrongly expreſſed againſt that inſolent *French* Panegyriſt, who firſt denies *Shakeſpear* almoſt every Dramatic Excellence, and then, in his next Play, pilfers from him almoſt every capital Scene. Let thoſe who want to be informed of this Man, and this Truth, read the *Mahomet* of *Voltaire*, and compare it with the *Mackbeth* of *Shakeſpear*, to this add (if you have Patience) a Peruſal of his Letters, you will then have, at one View, the *Zoilus* and the Plagiary, the

carping

carping superficial Critic, and the low paltry Thief. But to proceed:

The next Requisite, to an Observation of the Unities, (if we allow it a Requisite) is the *sine qua non*, the Essence of Comedy, Humour; and in this Particular we stand unrival'd; no Nation has more Comedies, no Comedies more diversified humourous Characters.

This may indeed, in a great Measure, be owing to the Nature of our Constitution, and the Complection of our Inhabitants.

In *France*, one Coxcomb is the Representation of the whole Kingdom. In *England* scarce any two are alike. I don't know but this Variety of Humour may, in a great Measure, derive its Source from Vanity. Property, with us, is so equally diffused, that the Distinctions arising from it are very trifling. In order then to procure a Pre-eminence, we have recourse to particular Singularities, which, though at first affected, are at last by Habit so closely rivited to the Mind, as to make it impossible for the Possessor ever to divest himself of it.

No

No Writer more abounds with Characters of this Caſt, than *Congreeve*; and had his Execution been equal to his Imagination, he would have had a juſt Title to be rank'd with the foremoſt of our Comic Poets. All his Humouriſts are well ſketch'd, and generally well begun, but ill conducted. The Author, from an Impatience to ſhow his own Wit, throws it into the Mouths of Characters, who are not, in Propriety, entitled to an Atom.

And this is, indeed, the Failing of all young Writers: They jump at the Shadow, and loſe the Subſtance: The main Article is neglected, and their Purſuit directed after Point, Antitheſis, and, what is called, fine Writing.

Wit is not what it has been by many imagined to be, the Eſſence of Comedy; ſo far from it, that it is of no Uſe, but as it is ſubſervient to Character.

And from this Miſtake it happens, that the Quality which chiefly recommends the Works of Mr. *Congreeve*, to the Obſervation of the Million, is the very Circumſtance that diminiſhes

miniſhes his Excellence with the Judicious.

Our next Enquiry muſt be directed after the Plots and Incidents of the Moderns: And in theſe Inſtances we are as various as in our Characters.

There ſeems to have been always a Trial of Skill amongſt the Antients, which ſhould write beſt on the ſame Subject. The Story of *Medea*, *Hercules*, &c. are the Objects of all their Tragedies. Their Want of Variety in Comedy I have before objected to.

That the Antients were more chaſte in the Conduct of their Plots, I ſhall readily allow. Immoralities of all kinds have met with a favourable a Reception on the *Engliſh* Stage, *Collier*'s Complaint was but too juſt. The Want of Decency, both of Expreſſion and Action, is an Objection that may with Juſtice be made to even our beſt Comedies. There are ſome kinds of Vice that it is improper to exhibit, though with a View of puniſhing. What kind of Apology then can be made for thoſe Writers, who have not only been ſo imprudent as to introduce it, but, at the ſame time, have dared to reward it.

The

The moſt blameable of all our Play-writers in this Inſtance, are *Congreeve* and *Vanburgh*. Nay, the latter, as if diſtruſting his own Talents for the Advancement of Wickedneſs, has called in to his Aſſiſtance, the moſt immoral Play that ever diſgraced the *Engliſh* Stage, the *Confederacy* of *Dancour*; in which all the Men are Rogues, and all the Women as bad. The principal Perſonage is the Son of a Bawd, who after having robbed his Mother, impoſed himſelf on the World in a fictitious Character, and committed Actions which had deſervedly doomed him to the Gallows, is at laſt made happy in the Poſſeſſion of a great Beauty and Fortune.

The Moral of this pretty Piece is, then, that be diſobedient, diſhoneſt, or any thing but virtuous, and you ſhall not fail of being rewarded.

But theſe Digreſſions have drawn me beyond my purpos'd Length; I ſhall therefore cloſe my Obſervations with a few general Remarks on the peculiar Excellencies of our principal Comic Writers.

Ben Johnſon is moſt ſucceſsful in his Plots, *Congreeve* in his Characters, and *Vanburgh* in his Dialogue. The former poſſeſſed moſt Knowledge and Judgment, the ſecond moſt Fancy and Fire, the laſt moſt Propriety, Eaſe, and Elegance. The firſt, in order to preſerve Correctneſs, was often flat; *Congreeve*, too roving and unconfin'd; and, *Vanburgh*, too immoral. Diveſt this laſt Writer of this Failing, and his Comedies are unexceptionably the beſt in the Language.

I ought to make ſome Apology for my ſilence with regard to *Wycherly*, *Otway*, *Farquar*, and *Cibber*; but as theſe Writers poſſeſs the ſame Beauties and Errors in common with thoſe already mentioned, it will be unneceſſary to trouble you with a particular Deſcription of their Works; I ſhall therefore cloſe this Treatiſe, but not before I have paid my Tribute to the Geuius of an Author, whoſe firſt Production has given him a Claim to be rank'd in the firſt Claſs.

It will (I doubt not) be often mentioned by future Generations, that in the Year 1746, Dr. *Hoadley* produc'd a Comedy, called the *Suſpicious Huſband*; in which he has found Means to give the

the highest Delight, without having recourse to the now usual Arts of Bawdy and Buffoonry.

But that we may not appear tainted with the common Partiality that generally attends Novelty, let us venture on the Discovery of those Qualities in this Piece, which have recommended it to the general Favour of the Public, and have obtained for it our particular Approbation.

In the first Place then, most of the Characters are real, the Incidents are interesting, the Catastrophe affecting, and the Language pure, spirited, and natural.

The Character of Mr. *Strickland*, (who names the Play) is as well drawn and supported, as any I have met with: And amongst the Scenes which the Author has designed to ridicule the Folly and Absurdity of Suspicion, none seems so well calculated for the Purpose, as that where *Strickland* is desirous, and yet afraid, of engaging one of his Domestics in the Service of his Passion: The Perplexity at which he shall trust, or whether he shall trust either; with the Doubts, Resolutions, Hesitations, on that Occasion, make up so natural

and comic a Deſcription of that Diſeaſe of the Mind, that the Play, on this Account only, deſerves the higheſt Encomiums.

Mrs. *Strickland* is deſcribed as ſuch a Woman ought to be, in order to render the Huſband's extravagant Humour without Excuſe. Her Innocence, joined to her other amiable Qualities, intereſt the Audience ſtrongly in her Favour, and place the Paſſion of Jealouſy in a more hated and ridiculous Light.

The two fine Gentlemen of this Comedy, are not (as I can perceive) different from the fine Gentlemen of other Writers: They laugh, ſing, ſay good Things, and are in Love.

The Rake is a lively Portrait of that Character in Life. His Errors ariſe from the want of Reflection; a lively Imagination, with a great Flow of Spirits, hurries him into all the faſhionable Follies of the Town; but throw the leaſt ſhadow of Wickedneſs or Diſhonour on an Action, and he avoids it with the ſame Care that he would a Precipice.

The natural good Qualities of this Youth, obtain for him on the Stage the ſame Indulgence

gence that attends him in the World: We are blind to his Foibles, entertained with his Adventures, and wish to see (in which, I suppose, by the Conduct of the Author, we are wrong) the wild Rogue reclaim'd.

I sat (the first Night this Comedy was exhibited) by a plain, honest, well-meaning Citizen, whose Imagination was strongly possessed by the Incidents of the Play. At dropping of the Curtain, I could not help complaining to my Neighbour, that I was displeased at seeing *Ranger* go off as he came on. Could not, said I, the Author throw this Youth, in the Course of his Nocturnal Rambles, into some ridiculous Scene of Distress, which might, with Propriety, have reclaim'd him. But, as he now stands, who knows but the Rogue, after all the Pleasure he has given us, may spend the Night in a Round-House. By G—d! says the Cit, if it happens in my Ward, I'll release him; for I'm sure he is too honest a Fellow to run away from his Bail.

The amiable Light in which this Character appears, will, I am afraid, draw many a *Templar* into troublesome Scrapes. I have now no less than ten Friends, since the Appearance of *Ranger*, who are under Prosecutions for ravish-

ing

ing Kiſſes from Girls in the Street, and beating the Watch: It is therefore neceſſary to let theſe ſprightly Boys know, that theſe are not the Particulars of *Ranger*'s Character that procure our Regard; we are only tempted to overlook theſe Blemiſhes in his Conduct, on the ſcore of ſome amiable Beauties.

But that we may not appear partial to the Productions of this Author, let us take a View of ſuch of his Characters, as appear liable to Exception.

That the Critics, then, might not be deprived of their daily Food, the Poet has thrown them a Couple of Characters to nibble at, the Coquet, and the Coxcomb.

The laſt is of a Species pretty common amongſt us, but hitherto neglected. The Importation of Fopperies from *France*, we have laughed at till we are tir'd: Our Author was willing to ſee whether *Italy* could not furniſh us with a Fool, as ridiculous and diverting as her Neighbour; and had the Character in Queſtion been ſupported with the ſame Spirit that it is begun, I doubt not but we ſhould have been fully ſatisfied: But no ſooner has this merry Gentleman raiſed our Attention, but he ſlips

through

through our Fingers like an Eel, and we hear no more of him. Mr. *Meggot* does, in Truth, ſurvive the Loſs of his Monkey, but he never forgets his Affection ſo far, as to be tolerable Company after.

I did indeed flatter myſelf with the Hopes of ſeeing that Gentleman intereſted in the Conduct of the Play, and every Minute expected to find my Friend *Ranger* very jocoſe upon his Foible.

But whether the Author did not chuſe to expoſe ſo good natur'd a Fellow, or was above being obliged to any Nation but his own, for the Entertainment he was to give us, *Jackey Meggot* is of very little more Conſequence in the *Suſpicious Huſband*, than is Lieutenant *Story* in the *Committee*.

The next Character for the Snarlers to mumble is *Clarinda*.

This Lady, at the opening of the Play, would put herſelf upon us for a finiſh'd Coquet; but ſhe does it ſo aukardly, that few of us are impoſed upon; ſhe is, indeed, at firſt a little waggiſh with *Jacintha*, about giving Eaſe, *&c.* but this was only a Copy of her Countenance,

for

for I dont't find but ſhe is as ready to ſatisfy the Deſires of her Lover (in an honourable Way) as the other.

But all this while are not we impoſing on ourſelves? How are we ſure that Dr. *Hoadley* intended *Clarinda* for a Coquet? Indeed ſhe ſometimes talks like one, but her Actions are directly oppoſite; and as I, for my own Part, chuſe to rely more on the latter, than the former, I ſhan't ſcruple to pronounce, that this Lady is no more a Coquet than *Jacintha*.

The ſeveral Objections at the Perſonages of the Drama being (as far as the Affair will admit of) thus clear'd up, let us attend to a Cavil or two at the Conduct of the Play.

It is ſaid, that *Frankley*'s whole Scheme of purſuing *Clarinda*, is borrow'd from the *Eunuch* of *Terence*; and that the Expreſſion of, *this I know, wherever ſhe is, ſhe cannot be long unknown*, is a literal Tranſlation from the ſame Author. Well, and what then? Why do we take ſuch Pains to create an Intimacy with the obſolete Gentry, if they don't help us out now and then at a dead Lift? The Doctor has been at ſome Pains and Expence to ſubdue the Meaning of this Claſſic to his own Comprehenſion; and has

has not he a Right, by the Law of Arms, to enjoy the Fruits of his Victory? Pretty Reaſoning, truly; and ſo I ſuppoſe you will reckon the Man, who now and then decorates a Period with a *Latin* and *Greek* Quotation, a Plagiary: Why, who the Devil would trouble himſelf to acquire thoſe Languages, if it were not for the Reputation that Practice procures him? Oh, fie! Beſides, in the preſent Caſe, the Doctor was under a Neceſſity of ſhewing his Learning. The little Bits of *Latin*, *Italian*, and *French*, which are here and there ſcattered through the Play, are not introduced becauſe the Poet thought them neceſſary, but becauſe the World ſhould know, that it is not a ſmall Matter of Knowledge that is required towards the Conſtitution of a Doctor of Phyſic.

But were we to anſwer all the trifling Remarks of theſe eternal Cavillers, there would be no End to the Subject; therefore I ſhall diſmiſs them with one general Anſwer, that I defy them to produce a Comedy, ſince the Year Twenty-ſix, that has a Tithe of the Merit of the *Suſpicious Huſband*. And though we may be deficient as to the *vis comica*, and our Characters may not be altogether ſo highly drawn, as might be wiſhed, yet, upon the whole, we are at leaſt equal to the beſt of the *Roman* Co-

mic Poets, *Terence*; and that is Reputation enough to ſatisfy our Ambition.

We have now given thee, Reader, an accurate Account of the public and private Judgment on the *Suſpicious Huſband*; ſuppoſe we were to preſent thee with our Opinion of the Deportment of the Actors in this Comedy: But as that would interfere with our general Deſign, I ſhall deſcend to no farther Particulars, than that they (on this Occaſion) excelled themſelves; but haſten to view the Comic Players of the preſent Age in a more extenſive Light.

But before theſe Gentlemen of the Sock are entitled to my Regard, I muſt diſcharge a Debt due to the Public, and pay their and my Acknowledgement to Mrs. *Cibber*, for the Pleaſure ſhe has given us in the Buſkin.

This Lady, though by much the youngeſt Actreſs (I mean in point of Experience) on the Stage, has almoſt all her Time reign'd unrival'd in the Hearts of the People. There is a Delicacy in her Deportment, and a ſenſible Innocence in her Countenance, that never fails to prejudice the Spectator in her Favour, even before ſhe ſpeaks. Nor does Mrs. *Cibber*'s ſubſequent

ſequent Behaviour eraze theſe firſt Impreſſions. Her Expreſſions of the Paſſion of Grief, ſurpaſs every thing of the ſort that I have ſeen. There is a melancholly Plaintiveneſs in her Voice, and ſuch a Dejection of Countenance, (without Diſtortion,) that I defy any Man, who has the leaſt Drop of the Milk of Human Nature about him, to ſit out the Diſtreſſes of *Monimia* and *Belvidera*, when repreſented by this Lady, without giving the moſt tender and affecting Teſtimonies of his Humanity.

Nor has Mrs. *Cibber* leſs Force (when ſhe pleaſes to exert it) in the different Modes of Rage. There is a Wildneſs in her Aſpect, and a Rapidity in her Utterance, that are admirably ſuited to the Characters of *Conſtance*, in *King John*, and *Alicia* in *Jane Shore*.

That Mrs. *Cibber* is now and then languid in the Part of *Caliſta*, may, I am afraid, be attributed to the natural Weakneſs of her Conſtitution. The Character is of an unuſual Length, and the Paſſions of Rage, Scorn, Grief, and Diſappointment, ſo frequently and forcibly repeated, that it requires more than a common ſtock of Health and Spirits, to do

equal Juſtice to the whole Part. I cannot preſume, that Mrs. *Cibber*'s Judgment is defective; nor is it leſs obvious, that ſhe is happy in the poſſeſſion of all the natural Powers required in this Character: To what then can we attribute the little Uſe ſhe here makes of thoſe Powers, but to the Conciouſneſs of weak Lungs, and a bad Conſtitution.

But leaſt the Imitators of Mrs. *Cibber* ſhould miſtake this Deportment of hers, for the Effect of her Judgment, it may not be improper to obſerve, that *Rowe* himſelf has recommended a Behaviour to the Player, and that it is her Duty, as near as ſhe can, to anſwer and ſupport the Portrait of *Caliſta*, given to the Audience by *Lothario* in the firſt Act:

Mad as the Prieſteſs of the Delphic God,
Enthuſiaſtic Paſſion ſwell'd her Breaſt,
Enlarg'd her Voice, and ruffled all her Form.

Though it may perhaps be deemed hypercritical to obſerve on trifling Faults, where there are ſo many glaring Beauties, yet as theſe Trifles are eaſily mended, and are, beſides, apparent to the moſt ſuperficial Spectator, I hope I ſhall have Mrs. *Cibber*'s Pardon, if I deſire her

her (unleſs ſhe has an abſolute Occaſion for it) to put the Handkerchief in her Pocket: And if ſhe would not ſhake her Head quite ſo much, and pat her Hands together quite ſo often, ſhe would infinitely oblige me, and many more of her Admirers.

I believe I ſhall eaſily obtain the Reader's Pardon for detaining him a Minute from the Comic Actors, when I tell him, it is to thank Mrs. *Giffard* for the Entertainment ſhe has, in many parts, given both him and me. To which, if I add, that ſhe ſtands unequal'd in the Character of *Mackbeth*, I but barely do her Juſtice.

Mrs. *Pritchard* too has a Right to our Obſervation in this place: But as I am at preſent a good deal confined, ſhe muſt be content with the Offerings I ſhall make her in her Comic Caſt. And in this place I muſt beg, that thoſe Ladies and Gentlemen, whoſe Names I may omit in this Treatiſe, would not impute my Neglect to the want of a ſenſe of their Merit: We who write for the Public, are but too often obliged to condeſcend to their Prejudices, and are therefore neceſſitated, in order to procure a ſale for our Pamphlets, to take up with thoſe Names,

Names, which they are pleaſed to recommend to our Obſervation.

Mr. *Neale* is generally allowed to do Juſtice to the Character of *Launcelot*, in the *Merchant of Venice*; and yet I dare believe a Criticiſm on Mr. *Garrick* in the Part of *Scrub*, in which neither the Author nor Actor are very capital, would be much better received, than a Comment on Mr. *Neale*'s Excellence in the *Jew*'s Man. This is undoubtedly an Hardſhip both on them and me. But to proceed.

As there is, Reader, in the writing of Comedies many different Species, ſo is there alſo in the acting of them.

But, for the ſake of Brevity, ſuffer me to confine the latter to two, the Comic, and the Comical. And, in order to give you a clear Idea of what I mean by the Diſtinction, caſt your Eye on the *Abel Drugger* of *G.* and the *Abel Drugger* of *C.* I call the ſimple, compoſed, grave Deportment of the former Comic, and the ſquint-ey'd grinning Grimace of the latter Comical. The firſt obtains your Applauſe, by perſuading you that he is the real Man. The latter indeed opens your Eyes, and gives you to underſtand, that he is but perſonating

ſonating the Tobacco-Boy: But then to atone for the Loſs of the Deception, you are ready to ſplit with Laughter, at the ridiculous Variations of his Muſcles. It may indeed be objected, that this Conduct deſtroys all Diſtinction of Characters, and may as well become *Sir John Daw*, or *Sir Amorous La Tool*, as honeſt *Nab*. Well, and what then? Don't Folks come to a Play to laugh? And if that End be obtained, what matters it how? Has not he the moſt Merit, who pleaſes the moſt? Suppoſe *G.* has the Approbation of Twenty or Thirty Judges in the Pit, ſhall I give up my Fun, which makes the Inhabitants of both the Gallerys my Friends, for his Humour? No, hold a little, that will never do. And to convince the Public, that Mr. *C.* is not ſingle in his Judgment, Mr. *H——y*, *W—d—d*, Mr. *Y——s*, both approve and purſue his Plan.

And here ſuffer me to caution the young Actors of both Houſes, that they be not too raſh in the Imitation of Mr. *C's.* Manner; let them firſt conſult their Abilities. Few People are happy in the Poſſeſſion of ſuch a ſett of Features. This Gentleman's are formed with ſuch peculiar Pleaſantry, that the Spectator at ſurveying them in their natural ſtate only, is (in the Words of the Commentator

on

on Dr. *Middleton)* often ſtruck with an unexpected Ha, ha! For what Mr. *C.* is indebted to Nature, Mr. *H——y* is obliged to Accident. This great Comedian was ſo fortunate, as in his Infancy to fall in the Fire, by which Means the left Corner of his Mouth, and the Extremity of his Chin, became very near Neighbours; how often that lucky Circumſtance has recommended him to the Approbation of the Sky-parlour Gentry, I ſubmit to the Critics on the Ground Floor.

Mr. *Quin*, Mrs. *Clive*, and Mrs. *Pritchard*, are ſo injudicious as to build their Fame on the Comic Foundation.

I own, I am weak enough to have a Regard for the Judgment of the latter; and therefore as I have an Averſion to Controverſy, and the Diſcovery of Faults is no very deſirable Office, I ſhall leave the Comical Gentry to the Enjoyment of their Opinion, and ſeek out for ſome Particulars in the Comic Actors, which may, at leaſt, juſtify my Partiality for them.

To begin with Mr. *Quin*.

Mr.

Mr. *Quin*'s Deportment, through the whole Caſt of his Characters, is natural and unaffected; his Countenance expreſſive, without the Aſſiſtance of Grimace; and he is indeed in every Circumſtance ſo much the Perſon he repreſents, that it is ſcarce poſſible for any attentive Spectator to believe that the hypocritical intriguing *Maſquell*, the ſuſpicious ſuperannuated Rake, the ſnarling old Batchelor, and the jolly jocoſe *Jack Falſtaff*, are imitated, but real Perſons.

And here I wiſh I had Room and Ability to point out the ſeveral maſterly Strokes with which Mr. *Quin* has often entertained my Imagination, and ſatisfied my Judgment; but under my preſent Confinement, I can only recommend the Man, who wants to ſee a Character perfectly play'd, to Mr. *Quin*, in the Part of *Falſtaff*; and if he does not expreſs his Deſire of ſpending an Evening with that merry Mortal, why, I would not ſpend one with him, if he would pay my Reckoning.

Mrs. *Clive* (the beſt Actreſs in her Walk, that I, or perhaps any Man living, has ſeen) next claims our Attention. This Lady is peculiarly happy in hitting the Humours of Characters

racters in low Life. The awkard Forwardneſs of a Country Girl, the ridiculous affected Airs of a Lady's Woman, or the pert Behaviour of an intriguing Chambermaid.

Mrs. *Clive* has been a little unhappy in her Choice of ſome Parts.

There are Characters in Comedy which require a Delicacy of Figure, and an Elegance of Behaviour; and as both Nature and Habit have denied Mrs. *Clive* the Poſſeſſion of theſe Requiſites, I would adviſe her never to think of perſonating a fine Lady of any Kind or Condition, unleſs the Author (with a View of rendering the Part ridiculous) has endowed it with ſome whimſical Peculiarity.

You have already, Madam, a Caſt of Characters in which your Action will always command the Attention and Applauſe of an Audience; don't, therefore, ſuffer an idle Ambition to deſtroy that Conſequence; which, if you purſue the Bent of your Genius, you have it ſtill in your Power to preſerve.

This Lady has now and then perhaps (owing to an Earneſtneſs for the Succeſs of the Buſi-

neſs)

neſs) expreſſed herſelf behind the Scenes in too loud and forcible a Manner.

This Circumſtance has (I am afraid) given ſome part of the Audience not a very favourable Opinion of her Temper. But when the Public are aſſured, that this Vehemence is aſſumed in order to procure a more decent Entertainment for themſelves, I doubt not but they will convert their Reſentment to Approbation.

The laſt, though not the leaſt Perſon to be conſidered, is Mrs. *Pritchard*, whoſe unblameable Conduct in private Life, joined to her Theatrical Excellence, has juſtly recommended her to the Eſteem of the Town.

Mrs. *Pritchard* is peculiarly happy in a good Voice, a pleaſing Figure, and a correct Judgment.

As Mrs. *Clive*'s Fort conſiſts in the Imitation of the Foibles and extravagant Humours of the *Beau Monde*; this Lady's Talent lies in the Repreſentation of the graceful and becoming Parts of their Characters. Not but I have ſeen Mrs. *Pritchard* exert herſelf with great Pertneſs, Propriety, and Spirit, in the

Part

Part of a waggiſh favourite *Abigal*; and have obſerved a Deportment, which I thought extremely engaging in her, when a Lady become extremely ridiculous, when awkardly mimick'd by her as an affected Servant.

But to ſum up Mrs. *Pritchard*'s Qualities in a few Words, from the various Caſt of her Characters, in all of which ſhe is pleaſing, and the Eaſineſs of her Diſpoſition, I would, were I a Pattentee, rather have her in my Service, than any Woman in *England*.

I believe I ſhould with Difficulty obtain the Pardon of the Public, if I neglected to beſtow a few Periods on their favourite Servant.

I have ſeen, with infinite Satisfaction, the Days of my Youth reviv'd in the forward, vacant, romping School-boy of Mr. *Garrick*.

Nor have I received leſs Pleaſure from the ſimple credulous Conduct and Countenance of *Abel Drugger*.

I have, in ſome Inſtances, beheld with exquiſite Delight, the ridicuolus Rapture of the vain ſelf-approved Poet; though in others I have miſſed a Gravity of Countenance, and

Dig-

Dignity of Deportment, which I have always (though perhaps falſly) aſſociated with my Idea of that ſolemn and ſerious Coxcomb.

I think *Garrick*'s Rake a ſprightly, merry, entertaining Fellow. I can't ſay I am fond of cultivating an Acquaintance with his Gentlemen. And as to his Fops, either lively or grave, I have them in utter Abhorrence.

As to the Merit of Mr. *Raſtor*, Mr: C———*b*, Mr. *Collins*, with the long *Et cæteras* of both Theatres, they muſt be content to have the Celebration of their Perfections deferred to another Seaſon; and I hope the Purchaſer won't think that I exaggerate the Excellence of theſe good People, when I ſhall rate him for the Whole of it at no more than Three-pence.

F I N I S.

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